

# THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

AND THE

EFFECT FRANCHISE IN THE COVENANTING CHURCH

THE EDITOR OF "THE COVENANTER."

DEAR SIR. A General Election is, at present, a period of considerable trial to the members of the Covenanting Church. Our principles require us to pay close attention to National movements, and to take a deep interest in every agitation that is likely to affect the moral character of the Nation, and its ultimate subjection to the authority of Christ. The Franchise, during the past year, has been greatly extended: and in due time, it will, we doubt not, be still further extended, so that every man, who is not positively disqualified by his own misconduct, shall be entitled to record his vote in the election of members of Parliament. The exercise of the Franchise, when no moral barrier stands in the way, we regard in the light—to use the words of the present Prime Minister—of a solemn duty imposed upon, rather than as a mere privilege accorded to, the members of the community. This duty Covenanters would be found not unprepared to perform, in an intelligent and fearless manner, could they do so with a clear conscience towards God, and in consistency with the higher duty which they owe to Christ, as “King of saints” and “King of kings.” There can be no worldly, selfish, or sinister reason why they should decline to use the Elective Franchise. By doing so they incur the displeasure of both parties in a contest, and forfeit the advantages that might possibly arise from the temporary success of political partisans. Nor could they justify themselves, before God and the country, for failing to exert their legitimate influence in promoting the best interests of the Nation, especially at such a crisis as this, if they could not adduce a valid Scriptural and pertinent reason for the singular and somewhat difficult course which they have elected to follow.

The difference between an absolute and a constitutional Government is this—in the former the Sovereign rules according to his own will, without having any efficient restraint or limitation imposed upon him by the people, in the other he rules in accordance with certain fundamental principles or laws enacted by the people, the mutual acknowledgement of which—whether by contract or otherwise—forms the compact which binds together the different parties in the Nation. In the former case the moral responsibilities of government rest, almost exclusively, upon the Sovereign, and righteous men, as of old, might be employed in situations of high official influence and trust without being

thereby necessarily involved in the guiltiness of the supreme administration. It is totally different in the case of a Constitutional Government. Moral responsibility attaches first and mainly to the party that frames and upholds the Constitution. In a free, representative Government, like our own, every man is theoretically presumed to approve of and conscientiously maintain the system of Government established by law. If radical evils be found therein, every man must accept his full share of responsibility for such evils and for all the consequences that issue therefrom, who by any public act, such as voting, personally accepts of and endorses the Constitution; or rather who does not take steps to free himself from such responsibility by *publicly protesting* against these evils, and refusing, in any manner, to identify himself therewith. The Testimony of the Covenanting Church is a deliberate and public protest against the evils embodied in the British Constitution; and those who consistently adhere to that Testimony stand absolved from all participation in the legalised sins of the Nation, and, moreover, are doing all that can be done in the meantime, with a safe conscience, to have all such sins eliminated and destroyed.

Mere membership in any association involves the individual who joins it in whatever measure of moral iniquity belongs to the fundamental principles of that association. But if identity with, and fealty to that association be solemnized with the awful sanction of an oath, how can he possibly hope to escape from the entire responsibility which springs from the character of its fundamental regulations? The Government of these countries, at the period of the Revolution, took avowedly the form of a contract or covenant between the King and the people. That contract defines and secures, on the one hand, the prerogatives of the King, and on the other, the duties and privileges of the people. On both sides this contract is ratified by oath. At his coronation the King is sworn to respect the laws and to maintain the established institutions of the country. On entering Parliament or any office of State the subject is sworn to "be faithful and bear true allegiance" to the Sovereign. The one Oath corresponds to the other. In stretch of obligation they are co-extensive. Together they symbolise and ratify the National compact in all its entirety. Allegiance represents, in legal phraseology, all the duty which a subject owes to his Prince. The strength and comprehensiveness of the Oath lies in its very simplicity. In a Constitutional Government the nature and extent of the duty of allegiance is mutually agreed upon and determined in the Constitution. The subject has no other safeguard against the exactions of arbitrary power. Nor has the Prince any other pledge of subjection and support in the varied duties and responsibilities which the Constitution has imposed upon him. Can it be conceived that any Government on earth would sanction or permit its subjects, in swearing the Oath of

Allegiance, to pledge their fidelity only to such parts of the Constitution as, for the time being, they may approve of, while by a process of "mental reservation" and "pious fraud" that might be expected in the followers of Ignatius Loyola, they pretend to repudiate and reject other parts, which are equally essential to the Constitution? Never was a more illegal, unhistorical, unphilosophical fiction invented for the purpose of extricating a party from the excruciating horns of a moral, or rather of a very immoral, dilemma. The simple Oath of Allegiance is the solemn acceptance of the National compact, in all its length and breadth, with whatever evils may belong to it, alike in its ecclesiastical and in its civil departments. It would be suicidal and absurd, in the highest degree, for any Nation to order it otherwise. To bind the Sovereign by Oath to maintain certain great National principles and institutions, and then to warrant or permit the subject, in tendering his Allegiance, "to reject, repudiate, and utterly to disregard" these institutions would be to sanction civil discord and even rebellion, by law, and to evoke the fiery and uncontrollable elements of revolution and destruction by the very action of the Constitution itself.

These views would not be disputed by any sane man in the community who had the least knowledge of Jurisprudence, unless when utterly blinded and bewildered by the exigencies of extreme partisanship. As a Church we have no particular interest in explaining these matters. The task has been forced upon us. Presbyterians generally acknowledge that there are great and fundamental evils in the British Constitution, which should not be sanctioned, and ought to be removed. But it seems that, in order to remove them, they first swear fidelity and allegiance to the Queen, who is solemnly bound to maintain them, and then, in many cases, they ultimately give their voice and vote for their direct maintenance and perpetuation. By holding them up they would pretend to pull them down. In addition to all the gross and glaring evils embodied in the Constitution, Covenanters object to it because it repudiates the authority of the Lord and of His Anointed, and is a deliberate and continued rejection of the Scriptural and Covenanted system which was erewhile established in these lands, and has still the strongest claims upon both rulers and people. The highest service we can render our country at the present time is to expose and denounce these evils, and to maintain our Testimony for Christ's supremacy. This we could not do with any consistency or effect, if, for any party reasons or worldly motives whatever, we could be induced to pledge our fidelity and allegiance to the very system which we publicly denounce. Some thoughtlessly say—this is at best a do-nothing policy. Even were this so, it is surely better than to do all that is asked of us for the maintenance of what is acknowledged to be wrong. It is sometimes our "strength to sit still." But to testify publicly and consistently against what is evil is the very



opposite of a do-nothing policy. It is the policy which Christ has commanded, and which has been honoured in the past for the removal of abuses and for the introduction of thorough and Scriptural reforms. All suggestions of a forced and artful character designed to aid us in reconciling things essentially and eternally opposed to each other, as well as every species of "mental reservation," "self-deception," and "pious fraud," we loathe and reject as debauching to the conscience and utterly discreditable to the cause of Christ. Happily the Nation does not enforce its *test* oaths and declarations upon us now; nor does it attach any civil pains and penalties to the utterance of a bold and consistent Testimony against the Ecclesiastical Supremacy of the Crown. We have the liberty of declining personal incorporation with the National Association—of refusing to swear fidelity and allegiance to a system which we know to be wrong—and we thankfully use it. But if that liberty were not accorded to us as British citizens, then as Christ's freemen and servants we would be constrained to take it and use it all the same. The words of Christ are unmistakably clear and conclusive as to the course of duty in all such circumstances. "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Nations. Fear them not; for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

The recent General Election brought into considerable prominence the position of the Covenanting Church in regard to the Elective Franchise. Our distinctive views have been very generally canvassed, and, in the columns of one Presbyterian newspaper, keenly contested. When a discussion is carried on in a fair and candid spirit we hail it with satisfaction, inasmuch as we can have no conceivable interest in maintaining any opinion that can be confuted, and it is only by agitation and discussion that our principles can be sufficiently disseminated, so as to leaven the public mind, and thereby generate a power of opinion that shall yet mould the national institutions in subjection to the will of Christ. The week before the election in Belfast there appeared an offensive paragraph in the *Banner of Ulster* in reference to the course which, it was supposed, certain Covenanters were about to follow. In reply, I sent a letter, which was refused insertion in the *Banner*, but which appeared in other Belfast newspapers, containing the following broad statement of our Testimony on the point:—"I beg to inform your readers

that the Covenanting Church takes no part in this election, and her members will vote neither for Liberal nor Conservative candidates. They cannot vote even for those who propose to do away with the Established Church and *Regium Donum*, however much they may desire this consummation; because that, before taking their seats in Parliament, members must solemnly swear before God and the Empire to maintain the very Supremacy which the *Banner* now denounces. We have not yet learned the morality of doing what we know to be wrong, even for the accomplishment of the greatest good." Soon after the election, the Editor of the *Londonderry Standard*, who had been most indiscreetly "meddling and muddling," after a fashion of his own, in this question before, selected the above statement for special animadversion. At the request of many friends I insert here the following reply, which was dated December 10th, 1868. I consider it quite unnecessary to insert any portion of his article beyond what is quoted in the letter, inasmuch as the correctness of the quotations and the fairness of the reasoning has not once been challenged. Everything of a personal character is expunged, as no longer affecting the argument:—

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE DERRY STANDARD.

SIR—In your paper of Saturday last there appeared an editorial under the heading, "Parliamentary Oaths—Errors Corrected." As an illustration of the mistakes existing on this subject, you take an extract from a letter written by me and published in some of the Belfast newspapers, in which it is asserted that Members of Parliament solemnly swear to maintain the supremacy of the Crown. In proof of your position, you quote the Oath of Allegiance, which is the only oath now required on entering Parliament, and you assert that "when this oath is interpreted in the light of the fundamental principles embodied in the Revolution Settlement of 1688, it involves none of the monstrous consequences erroneously alleged in the extract above" referred to. So far you simply set your assertion against mine. Had you proceeded to show from the principles embodied in the Revolution Settlement, or embodied anywhere else, that the Oath of Allegiance did not involve the consequences, which I still maintain that it does involve, then it would have appeared that your assertion was better founded than mine—that you had caught me in an error, and succeeded in correcting a gross mistake. This you do not attempt to do; but with a commingled air of editorial mysticism and supremacy, take leave of the subject by saying that, "on an 'open day' we have more than half-a-mind to take an opportunity of enlightening our readers on this important subject." In the meantime, until the other half of your mind consents to the task, and until an "open day" occurs, the public must be satisfied with the infallibility of your assertion, that I am wrong in this mat-

ter. I beg to submit that even a "respectable Covenanting Minister of Belfast" is not to be convicted of error so easily as this; and that this mode of correcting public mistakes is rather too much in the *ex cathedra* style to be adopted even by the respectable Editor of the *Londonderry Standard*.

The only point in dispute between us is the right interpretation of the Oath of Allegiance—does it, or does it not, involve an obligation to maintain the present supremacy of the Crown?

I grant that it is in accordance with constitutional law and practice for Parliament to make any change, even in the framework of the constitution, which the majority of its members may demand. Neither the Coronation Oath nor the Oath of Allegiance can prevent this. But possible changes, or changes looming in the distance, and rapidly approaching, however much they may be desired by us all, cannot be taken into account in the present interpretation of the oath. When constitutional changes have been made, as, for instance, the admission of Roman Catholics and Jews to Parliament and to office under the Crown, then corresponding changes have been made on the oaths required to qualify for such situations. The Oath of Allegiance must be interpreted in accordance with the existing constitution, or "according to law." When the law has been altered, that change will carry with it a corresponding alteration in the extent of obligation involved in the oath. Meanwhile, whatever prerogatives and position are assigned to the Sovereign by the unrepealed laws of the land, these, the Member of Parliament in swearing the Oath of Allegiance, binds himself to maintain.

There is another preliminary point to which I must reluctantly refer. You say, "The startling absurdity of Members of Parliament first solemnly swearing to *maintain* the Royal Supremacy in ecclesiastical matters, by way of qualification for *enabling* them to *pull down* that same supremacy, ought to have led the rev. gentleman to suspect the existence of a gross *mistake* somewhere in his own logical data." With all respect for your perspicacity and distinguished logical acumen, I submit that this is a gross *non sequitur*, in argument, and has nothing whatever to do with the right interpretation of the oath. Knowing, as you do, the blind and reckless manner in which both statesmen and churchmen have been accustomed to swear in time past, the oaths of office—which has been so often exposed and denounced in the leading columns of the *Standard*—if there be, and every one knows there is, a "startling absurdity" oftentimes in the public conduct of men who have taken these oaths, then you might have suspected that the gross *mistake* and *error* in the case might possibly be found somewhere else than in the logical data of my argument. I am not to be held responsible either for the way in which Members of Parliament understand and swear the Oath of Allegiance, or for the "startling absurdity," as you term it, of their after career. It is enough for



me to know that statesmen, like other men, should "swear in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness," and that the terms of every oath which they swear are to be interpreted in the same manner. But to show that your argument here is quite fallacious, let me present an illustration of a parallel character. Supposing I were to assert that every man who publicly swears or subscribes to the Westminster Confession of Faith thereby binds himself before God and the Church not to maintain or endow Popery; and were to add to that, as all elders in the Presbyterian Church do subscribe the Confession of Faith, therefore, all elders who enter Parliament are pledged not to maintain or endow Popery. And supposing that still bent on the chivalrous task of correcting all errors and mistakes with regard to ecclesiastical as well as Parliamentary oaths, you were to reply that—"The startling absurdity of Members of Parliament first solemnly swearing *not* to maintain Popery by way of qualification, for enabling them to argue and vote for the continued endowment of Popery, ought to have led the rev. gentleman to suspect the existence of a gross *mistake* somewhere in his own logical data"—in that case I ask would the readers of the *Standard* not strongly suspect that the gross *mistake* lay lurking at the basis of your argument, rather than of mine?

I now come to the main point at issue—what is the right interpretation of the Oath of Allegiance—does it or does it not involve an engagement to maintain the Royal Supremacy?

In the words of Sir W. Blackstone, "Allegiance is the tie or *ligamen* which binds the subject to the King, in return for that protection which the King affords the subject." Other oaths which were required in former times were devised for special and explanatory purposes; the Oath of Allegiance has ever been the principal tie or obligation by which subjects are held bound to maintain the dignity and prerogatives of the British Crown. As Sir M. Hale observes, this oath has ever been short and plain, "and yet is comprehensive of the whole duty from the subject to his Sovereign." The oath itself, brief as it is, determines, beyond the possibility of cavil or evasion, the nature and extent of the obligation it imposes. It is "true allegiance," according to law. Whatever, then, is the place, or power, or prerogative assigned to the Sovereign by law, the person who swears the Oath of Allegiance, solemnly pledges himself to maintain his Sovereign therein. The Sovereign is nothing but what the law makes him: he can do nothing but what the law empowers him to do. Hence, at his coronation, he is most solemnly pledged to govern "according to law." But how could he govern according to law, or maintain any dignity or prerogative which the law may assign to him, if the people who have made these laws do not acknowledge and maintain him in the execution thereof—if in the words of the Oath they do not be "faithful and bear true allegiance" to him according to law?

The Oath of Allegiance is the distinct and solemn recognition, on the part of individual subjects, of the Sovereign in whatever position of dignity or supremacy the law has placed him, together with a solemn engagement before God and the Empire to maintain him in the exercise of that Supremacy. If this be not the meaning of the Oath, it means nothing. In that case, simple and well-defined as it is, it must be taken nevertheless to consist of indeterminate and cabalistic phrases which may be interpreted as meaning anything or nothing according to the interest or the whim of the moment.

In confirmation of this common-sense view of the meaning of the Oath, and in order to show that this rendering is in harmony with "the fundamental principles embodied in the Revolution Settlement of 1688," I will quote the words of a distinguished Advocate, the late J. S. More, Esq., Professor of Conveyancing in the University of Edinburgh. He says—

"The Oath of Allegiance, as modified at the Revolution of 1688, to its present form, was undoubtedly intended to bind every person who swore it, to recognise and submit to the *Constitution* as then settled. The Allegiance to the King, to which the Oath binds, has reference to him as *as the head of the Constitution*. Of course it also applies to him personally, as being placed at the head of the Constitution; but I apprehend its chief meaning, and that which was in the view of its framers, is to recognise him as *the head of the Constitution*, and so to include the whole Constitution by this reference to its head. It is scarcely possible, as has sometimes been contended, that the framers of our Revolution Settlement could have had in view merely the person of the Sovereign, considered as an individual, because they had just superseded one family, whose hereditary claims to the Throne could admit of no doubt, and they had established the principle that it belonged to the people, through the medium of Parliament to decide who should be the Sovereign or head of the Constitution. And therefore I have no doubt that though the Oath necessarily included the individual in whom the succession to the Crown vests under the Act of Settlement, it regards him chiefly as the head of the Constitution, and so includes assent to the principles of the Constitution."

In order to complete my argument, it only remains for me to show, what indeed no one will dispute, that "the Royal Supremacy in ecclesiastical matters" is a prominent part of the British Constitution, and a prerogative of the Crown, which every Member of Parliament swears to maintain. By an Act of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, it is enacted that "The King, His Heirs and Successors, shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England, and shall have annexed to the imperial Crown of this realm, as well the title and stile thereof, as all jurisdictions, authorities, and commodities, to the said dignity of supreme head of the Church ap-



pertaining." This law is still an acknowledged and prominent part of the Constitution of the British Empire. Nay, more, Blackstone in his Commentaries on the Laws of England, informs us that this Supremacy has been long acknowledged as an "inherent prerogative of the Crown." That the British Parliament still recognises and maintains this Supremacy in all its dignity and force is patent to all. That the Oath of Allegiance, the only Oath that is now administered to Members of Parliament, is understood by constitutional authorities, to bind the swearer to uphold all the dignities and prerogatives of the Crown, is equally manifest. Lord Macaulay in his History describes this Oath as a "safeguard of the Crown," of which the ecclesiastical supremacy has been recently proclaimed to be one of the brightest jewels. I should like to know how any one could swear it "in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness," without thereby acknowledging the "Royal Supremacy in ecclesiastical matters," and engaging to maintain it.

You say "This respectable writer's conclusion would be overwhelming if his premises had any foundation in fact." I submit that it has been now shown that my premises are amply and indisputably founded both in law and in fact; and, therefore, the conclusion I have announced is overwhelming."

The Editorial comments which accompanied the above letter were so far extremely satisfactory that they did not attempt to shake the correctness or conclusiveness of the arguments adduced. While retreating from his former positions, however, the Editor very determinately took up new ground, from which he assailed, with renewed confidence, our interpretation of the Oath of Allegiance. This will appear from the extracts contained in the subjoined refutation, with which we close, having already encroached too far on your limited space:—

"The position which you now assume is this—'That the simple Oath of Allegiance means only *civil* obedience in *civil* and *secular* matters, without the slightest reference, direct or indirect, to the Erastian Headship' of the Sovereign—that 'the State has totally and entirely *separated* the Ecclesiastical Supremacy from the State doctrine of Allegiance, ever since the Revolution.' Now, although it is not required that I should prove the negative of these propositions, I boldly assert that you cannot produce any law or action of the State, from the time of the Revolution down to the present hour, in confirmation of these assertions. The State has made no such distinction, as is here alleged, between civil and ecclesiastical Allegiance. The State has never discarded, nor does it permit any man to discard, the Erastian element of the Royal Supremacy out of the Oath of Allegiance. The only instance you condescend to notice in proof is most unfortunate for your purpose. 'The Act of Toleration,' you say 'enables every subject of the Crown to *reject, repudiate, and utterly to disregard* the ecclesiastical as distinguished from the

civil Supremacy, Episcopalian State Clergymen being the only parties excepted.' The Act of Toleration does the very reverse of all this. It required Dissenting preachers and teachers, in addition to swearing the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, to subscribe the Declaration and the 37th Article of the Church of England, which says—'The Queen's Majesty hath the chief Power in this Realm, under whom the chief government of all Estates, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain.' Is that an authoritative repudiation of the Erastian Supremacy by all subjects of the Crown—'Episcopalian State Clergymen being the only parties excepted?' In the Emancipation Act of 1829, Roman Catholics, swearing the Oath of Supremacy, in which the authority of the Pope over these lands is denied, were permitted to use the words—temporal or civil supremacy, instead of the words ecclesiastical or spiritual. This is the only instance in which the State has permitted its subjects to make a distinction between Supremacy of a civil and of a spiritual character in any Oath that is sworn; but this distinction refers to the Supremacy of the Pope of Rome, and not to that of the Queen of England.

"After all these reckless assertions, the question still arises for solution, as at the first—Does the simple Oath of Allegiance involve an acknowledgment of the Queen's Supremacy over the Church? I have shown already that the natural and constitutional import of the Oath requires such an acknowledgment. You say, in reply, that 'it is a fundamental axiom, universally acknowledged, that, every Oath *means* exactly what the party *imposing* that Oath *intends* it to mean, and nothing else.' Without waiting to scrutinize this doctrine of *intention*, which, in your hands, has been transmuted into a 'fundamental axiom, universally acknowledged,' I accept of it as a canon of interpretation in the present case, and will abide by the decision to which it leads.

"The Act by which the present Oath of Allegiance received the sanction of Parliament was prepared as a Government measure, and passed in the year 1866. At the second reading the Attorney-General, Sir R. Palmer, thus expounded the *intention* of its framers, and therefore the exact meaning and obligation of the Oath (I quote from *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*):—'I say that the Oath, as we now propose to frame it, is intended to embrace two things—namely, the great principle of personal loyalty to the Sovereign, and that of loyalty to the Monarchy as established by the fundamental laws of the Constitution. We have agreed as to that.' One of the fundamental laws of the Constitution to which the swearer of the Oath pledges his loyalty is the Supreme Headship of the Sovereign in all causes, *ecclesiastical* as well as *civil*. Mr. Disraeli, as leader of the Opposition, proposed the addition to the Oath of a clause asserting her Majesty's exclusive Supremacy in all the Courts of

the Realm. The language of the Attorney-General in reply determines the point we are now discussing, as conclusively as if he had been delivering a premeditated judgment thereupon. 'They actually limit the jurisdiction of her Majesty to the Courts, as though her Majesty's Supremacy only extended to the judicial power of the Crown. Is there any principle of constitutional law which so limits the Royal Supremacy?' Then, after reading the Statute of Elizabeth, determining the Queen's Supremacy in all causes ecclesiastical, he proceeds—'If you insert anything in the Oath about one branch of her Majesty's Supremacy, you should refer to the other branches of it in terms of the Statute-book; but by omitting to say anything concerning it, we leave it in FULL FORCE as it stands in the Statute-book, and it is binding on all men. If it be desired to undermine her Majesty's general Supremacy, then nothing can be better for the purpose than the proposition of the right hon. gentleman.' In the course of the same debate Mr. Whiteside said—'I beg permission to remind the Attorney-General that Lord Hale says that the Oath of Supremacy is but an expansion of the Oath of Allegiance, and that Chatham said on one occasion that Parliament had no more right to interfere with the principle of the Supremacy of the Crown than it had to set aside the Bill of Rights or Magna Charta.' I have but one other quotation to make. But it is so *authoritative* and conclusive, and meets the demands of the case so perfectly, that it must at once and for ever settle the question in the estimation of all candid and competent judges. In the very Act of Parliament itself, which contains the Oath, and by which it has received the force of Law, there is a section prepared for the express purpose of showing that the Oath of Allegiance not only does not, in any way, weaken or repudiate the Queen's Supremacy in ecclesiastical matters, but that it should, and must be, understood as virtually embracing and comprehending all the Statutes of the Empire enforcing this supremacy; and this is the identical interpretation which we have uniformly put on the Oath of Allegiance. In Section 6 of the 'Act to amend the Law relating to Parliamentary Oaths,' a number of Acts relating to previous Oaths are declared to be repealed; but only on the following condition—'Provided, always, that the Repeal of these Acts, of any of them, or any Parts thereof, shall not be construed to weaken, or in any Manner to affect any Laws or Statutes now in force for preserving and upholding the Supremacy of our Lady the Queen, her Heirs and Successors, in all Matters Civil and Ecclesiastical within this Realm and other her Majesty's Dominions.' Lord Derby declared in the House of Lords that it was in consequence of the explanation of the Attorney-General that the simple Oath of Allegiance is designed to cover and embrace the Royal Supremacy in all its branches, and with all the force that is given to it in the Constitution, that he and many others con-



sented to accept the Oath in its present form. If, then, 'it is a fundamental axiom, universally acknowledged, that any Oath means exactly what the party imposing that Oath intends it to mean, and nothing else,' it is henceforth placed beyond the reach of rational doubt or denial that the Oath of Allegiance means that those who swear it are thereby bound, before God and the Empire, to acknowledge and maintain the Queen in the exercise of her Royal Supremacy over the Church.

"This is the reason why Covenanters refuse to swear the Oath of Allegiance, or even to vote for Members of Parliament who are required to do so. We have sworn allegiance to 'another King, one Jesus,' in all spiritual and ecclesiastical matters, and we have no intention of *dividing* that allegiance with an earthly king, or of acknowledging any Headship in the Church but His. The natural duties which we owe to the Sovereign and to the Empire, as subjects, we cheerfully render; the religious duties of fealty, and service due to Christ, we are not less anxious to perform—remembering the authoritative deliverance of the Great Master, when men tried to 'entangle Him in His talk,' that they might be able to bring a charge of *rebellion* against him—'Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God, the things that are God's.' Herein have we striven from the first to exercise ourselves "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.' But if, because we dare not render unto Cæsar any of the things which belong exclusively to God, baffled and intolerant men wax angry, and raise against us the old cry of *treason* and *rebellion*, we shall bear it meekly, nay, even joyfully, because that thereby we know that our Testimony for Christ's Supreme Headship and glory shall be promoted, and we shall have the honour of suffering, at least, reproach for the name's sake of our Blessed Master. The conflicting aims and tactics of the two great parties which are now contending for place and power in this Realm have but a limited interest for us, while both rally with equal readiness to the Constitutional principle of the Queen's Royal Supremacy over the Church, and swear to maintain it. More than two hundred years ago we raised aloft the Banner of blue, with its golden inscription, 'FOR CHRIST, HIS CROWN, AND HIS COVENANT' and bore it fearlessly, in the face of persecution, on the mountains and in the glens of Scotland and of Ulster. Historians now acknowledge that to that Banner is mainly due the great and glorious Revolution of 1688. After such a conquest as this by the grace of God, that Banner shall never be furled or lowered in our hands till it shall have led the way to a still greater and more glorious Revolution, in which this kingdom, and all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

respectfully yours,

"JOSIAS A. CRANFORD"

"Belfast, Dec. 19th, 1868."